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GOVERNOR BEEBE EXPANDS ARKANSAS WORKS INITIATIVE TO OFFER ARKANSANS JOB TRAINING, CAREER EDUCATION

LITTLE ROCK (November 9, 2009) – Governor Mike Beebe today announced a major expansion of Arkansas Works, the governor's strategic initiative to coordinate education, training and economic development in Arkansas communities. The expansion focuses on providing unemployed and underemployed Arkansans with career training and educational opportunities.

"As communities work hard to attract new business, the State will help ensure that a qualified workforce stands ready to fill those jobs," Beebe said. "The world is quickly changing, and Arkansas must accelerate its pace to create careers for our citizens. This effort has something to help every Arkansan, whether you need a job, want to find a better job or want to shift to a new career."

Beebe helped unveil the College and Career Planning System, an online information resource that will help Arkansans locate jobs that fit their interests and help businesses find qualified candidates to meet their workforce needs. Every Workforce Development Center in Arkansas has personnel prepared to assess job seekers and help them connect with jobs and industries that lead to satisfying careers.

In January, 43 career coaches will be placed in high schools to offer enhanced career guidance to students who want to build careers in Arkansas. The career coaches will be employed by the two-year colleges located in the communities these coaches are placed.

In addition, up to \$8,000 in financial aid may be available, based on the needs of each individual, to help pay for career training and education.

The Governor's Workforce Cabinet will lead the public-private partnership. The Cabinet includes the Arkansas Department of Career Education, Arkansas Department of Career Services, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Economic Development Commission as well as private partners such as the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges and the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce.

Beebe began the Arkansas Works Initiative in October, 2008 with The Governor's Summit on Education and Economic Development, the first such summit in the State's history. At that time, Beebe brought together more than 1,500 education, economic development, community and business leaders from every county.

The College and Career Planning System will build a database that Arkansas's businesses can use to locate an available and interested workforce. Businesses also will be able to use the Arkansas Works website to showcase themselves and the career opportunities they offer.

The System can be accessed at <http://www.arworks.arkansas.gov> or by calling 1-866-ARWORKS (1-866-279-9677). Participants must visit a Workforce Development Center first to start the process and to get log-in information.